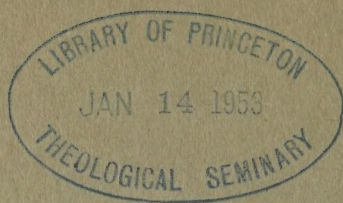


Leo XIII

—

The Reunion
of
Christendom

BX1374
.A3P83



BX1374
.A3P83

PHOTOMOUNT
PAMPHLET BINDER
~
Manufactured by
GAYLORD BROS. Inc.
Syracuse, N.Y.
Stockton, Calif.

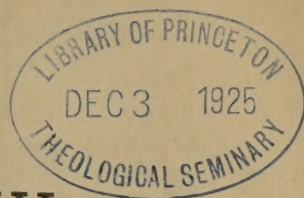
374
P83

Warfield Library

APOSTOLIC LETTER

OF HIS HOLINESS

✓
POPE LEO XIII.



ON

THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM.

REPRINTED from "THE UNIVERSE," JUNE 30, 1894.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT "THE UNIVERSE" OFFICE,
310, STRAND, W.C.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

5d net

TO THE PRINCES AND PEOPLES OF THE WORLD.

HEALTH AND PEACE IN THE LORD.

The splendid testimonies of public congratulation which reached Us in the course of last year from all parts of the world on the occasion of Our Episcopal Jubilee, which lately reached their height in the marked devotion of the Spanish nation, have chiefly consoled Us by the thought that in this unanimity of sentiment shone forth the unity of the Church and their wonderful union with the Supreme Pontiff. It seemed in those days as if the Catholic world turned aside from other cares to fix its gaze and its thoughts upon the Vatican. Embassies from Princes, numerous pilgrimages, letters full of affection, and most august ceremonies, brilliantly attested that Catholics in their reverence for the Apostolic See are of one heart and soul. These events are even more joyful and acceptable since they answer to Our designs. Seeing that we well understand the condition of the times, and mindful of Our duty, We have through the whole course of Our Pontificate turned constantly Our attention—and as far as We could by teaching and work—to draw more closely to Us the nations and peoples of the whole world, and to show clearly the always beneficent efficacy of the Roman Pontificate. We therefore render grateful thanks to the Divine Goodness for having granted Us the singular favour of reaching safely so great an age. We are also grateful to the Princes, the Bishops, the clergy, and many others, who, with numerous demonstrations of piety and respect, worked together to render honour to the dignity We hold, and to offer to Ourselves very opportune consolation. In truth, however, to obtain a full and perfect consolation there remains not a little yet to be desired.

THE NEEDS OF THE WORLD.

Because, while in the midst of these testimonies of the joy and love of the people, there were present in Our mind the immense multitude who were strangers to these Catholic celebrations—some because they were deprived of all knowledge of the Gospel; some who, although Christians, dissented totally from the Catholic faith. This fact, then, bitterly afflicted Us, and it afflicts Us to this hour, for it is not possible to reflect without heartfelt grief on so large a portion of the human race having wandered away so far from Us by misleading paths. Now therefore, as We are upon earth the representative of Almighty God, who wishes all men to be saved and attain to a knowledge of the truth, and as our years and bitterness of soul urge Us to the close of Our mortal career, it seemed good to Us to imitate our Redeemer and Master, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, on the eve of returning to heaven, earnestly besought God the Father that His Disciples and followers should be all of one mind and one heart. “That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in Me, and I in

Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (St. John xvii. 21). This divine prayer and supplication was made not alone for those who already believed in Christ but also for all those who in the future should believe. Not without reason therefore do We wish to make known Our strong desire, and within the measure of our power to bring about that all people of every land and race should be called and invited to join the unity of divine faith.

MISSIONS TO THE HEATHEN.

Moved by charity, which hastens most speedily to where there is most need of help, the mind first turns to peoples who are the most unfortunate, whom the light of the Gospel has not reached or has been extinguished by carelessness, or by the vicissitudes of the times, who are ignorant of God, and remain in the worst of errors. Since all salvation comes from Jesus Christ—"For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12)—it is Our greatest wish that the Most Holy Name of Jesus should be known without delay, and should reign in every region of the earth. And to effect this the Church has never ceased to carry out the mission she had from God. She has devoted herself to this work during 1900 years, and what task could she carry out with more ardour and constancy than to summon the peoples of the world to the truth and to a Christian life? And now also We have frequently sent forth preachers of the Gospel, who have crossed the seas to carry it to the most distant countries. There never passes a day that We do not supplicate Almighty God that He would mercifully deign to multiply priests worthy of the apostolate, in order that, to extend the reign of Christ, they may not hesitate to sacrifice their health, and, if needs be, their life also. And Thou, O Saviour and Father of the human race, our Lord Christ Jesus, hasten and do not delay the fulfilment of Thy promise that when Thou wert lifted up all men shall be drawn to Thee. Come now therefore and reveal Thyself to the multitudes who are now altogether deprived of the most precious benefits which Thou hast gained for mortals with Thy precious blood; appeal to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, that, enlightened by the splendour of Thy wisdom and power, in Thee, and by Thee, they may be united in one.

UNITY OF FAITH NECESSARY.

Dwelling in Our thoughts upon the need of unity, We thought of all those nations whom the Divine Pity drew a long time since from their former errors to the wisdom of the Gospel. In truth, nothing gives more joy than to remember, with abundant thanks to the providence of God, than these ancient ages when the Christian faith was universally regarded as the common and undivided patrimony; when nations diverse in locality, in genius, and in customs, although often disagreeing with each other, and even in conflict, nevertheless in matters of religion were unanimous in the faith of Christ. Remembering these facts, it is too painful to think that in succeeding ages distrust and enmity, the result of ill-omened events, have snatched from the bosom of the Roman Church great and flourishing peoples. Notwithstanding this, confiding

in the grace and mercy of Almighty God, who alone knows the hour of assistance, and in whose hand it remains to incline as He pleases the will of men, to these same peoples We address Ourselves, and with paternal love We exhort and beseech them that, putting aside all dissensions, they may turn to unity.

THE EASTERN CHURCHES.

And first of all with intense affection We look to the East, from which came from the first the salvation of the world. Yes, it is Our anxious and earnest desire to be able to hold the joyful hope that the Churches of the East, enlightened by their hereditary faith and by their ancient glories, should no longer absent themselves, but should return to the point from which they parted. We have the greater confidence in this, since the distance between Us is not great; hence while so few matters divide Us, on the remainder We can agree and unite in defence of Catholic doctrine, giving testimony and proof also by the rites, the teaching, and the practices of the Oriental Church. The principal point of dissent is the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. Let them look to early times, consult the opinions of their ancestors, and the traditions of the first century. Assuredly these show forth strongly the proof that it was to the Roman Pontiffs that the oracle of Christ applied: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church." And among the number of the Pontiffs we find in the early days not a few drawn from the East, and especially—an Anacletus, an Evaristus, an Anicetus, an Eleutherius, a Zozimus, an Agatho—to many of whom also it was given to seal with their blood the government of the whole Christian Church wisely and safely ruled by them. The time, the circumstances, the authors of the unhappy discord are well known. Before man had separated what God had joined together, the name of the Apostolic See was venerated by the whole Christian world, and to the Roman Pontiff, as legitimate successor of St. Peter, and thus Vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth, the East, equally with the West, yielded obedience in concord. Therefore if We look at the commencement of the discord, Photius himself deemed it necessary to send legates to Rome to decide his questions, and Pope Nicholas I., without any opposition, sent from Rome his representatives to Constantinople in order that "*they should discreetly investigate the case of the Patriarch Ignatius, and truthfully and with full evidence should submit the same to the Apostolic See.*" Hence the whole history of this fact manifestly confirms the primacy of the Roman See. Lastly, in the two Ecumenical Councils, the second of Lyons and in that of Florence, nobody ignores the fact that spontaneously and with one voice all the Latins and Greeks decreed as a dogma the supreme power of the Roman Pontiffs. We love to remember these facts precisely, because We invite them to return to peace, the more so as with the Easterns it seems the hour to entertain milder feelings, when there is such a tendency shown of good-will towards Catholics. We had lately a proof of this when We saw pious bands of Catholic pilgrims received in the East with singular demonstrations of courtesy and friendship. To you therefore Our heart opens, whether you be of the

Greek or other Oriental Rite, separated from the Catholic Church. Let each one remember, as we most earnestly desire, the grave and moving words of Bessarion to your fathers :

What justification shall we plead before God for being separated from our brethren, although to unite them into one fold He Himself came down from heaven, was born and crucified? What defence will be ours before posterity? Let us not suffer such shame, venerable fathers; far from us be such an advice; let us not deal so badly for ourselves and our children.

Weigh well Our words before God. Not human respect but divine charity should exhort you to peace and union with the Roman Church—we mean a full and perfect union—but this can be effected by no other means than by a community of dogma and an exchange of fraternal charity. The true union for Christians is that which Christ Jesus, the founder of the Church, instituted and wished for, which is founded upon unity of faith and unity of rule. Have no fear that either We or Our successors should wish to interfere with your rights, with the Patriarchal prerogative, or with the ritual customs of each Church, because it was always the intention and the practice of the Apostolic See to regard broadly and equitably the origins and customs of the various nations. On the contrary, if your communion with us is re-established no one can sufficiently say what will be the amount of fruit and glory which will flow into your Church. Therefore address to our all-good God your own prayer: “Abolish, O Lord, the schisms of the Church.” And, again, “Gather together and bring back the wanderers to the one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church” (Liturgy of St. Basil). Then turn to this one and holy faith, which the most remote antiquity has unalterably transmitted to you and to us equally, which your fathers and clergy preserved inviolate, which yet shines with the splendour of the virtues, the greatness of the genius, and the excellence of the doctrines preached and illustrated by Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, the two Cyrils, and many other great men whose glory belongs equally to the East and the West.

TO THE SLAVONIAN CHURCH.

In particular, We would address a few words to you, the Slav people, to whose name history has rendered such worthy testimony. You know how honoured by the Slavs are SS. Cyril and Methodius, your fathers in the faith, to whose memory We Ourselves decreed a few years ago a due increase of honour. For many of your race by their labours and virtues attained salvation and civilization. For a long period there existed between the Slavs and the Roman Pontiffs an exchange of favours on the one side and of most faithful piety on the other. But the deplorable misfortunes of time alienated a large number of your forefathers from the faith of Rome. Consider therefore how precious to you would be your return to unity. For the Church does not hesitate to recall you to her bosom, and is ready to convey to you copious aids to salvation, prosperity, and grandeur.

PROTESTANTISM.

With equal love we look to the peoples who in a later age were separated from the Roman Church by a strange revolution of events. Ignoring the many vicissitudes of preceding ages, let them raise their minds above human consideration, and with minds eager for truth and salvation set themselves to study the Church which was established by Christ. If they will compare their own communities and the religion taught by them with the Church, they must admit that, denying the primitive faith, they have fallen into many errors, nor will they deny that of the patrimony of truth which they took with them at their secession scarcely any authoritative formula remains. Thus many venture to attack the basis itself on which rests all the religion and all the hopes of the human race—that is to say, the divinity of Jesus Christ our Lord. Similarly the books of the Old and New Testament, which had before been recognized as divinely inspired, are now stripped of that authority, which must inevitably ensue if everybody has the privilege of interpreting them for himself. Hence the private conscience of each one was made the only guide and moral standard, rejecting every rule of action, from which there arose many opposite opinions and a multiplicity of sects, which often resulted in Naturalism or Rationalism. From this cause, despairing of ever finding themselves in accord on doctrinal matters, they exalt and recommend fraternal union in charity. And this is just, since we should all try to be united in mutual charity. This Jesus Christ commanded above all things, and He made love of one another the distinctive mark of His flock. But how can perfect charity unite hearts if faith has not brought the minds into accord? It is on this account that many of whom We have spoken, having good judgment and being eager for the truth, have sought in Catholicism the safe road of salvation, knowing well that they cannot be united to Jesus Christ as their head unless they are united at the same time to His body, which is the Church; nor could they follow the true faith of Christ while repudiating the legitimate supremacy given to Peter and his successors. They recognized therefore in the Roman Church the ideal type of the true Church, easily shown by the marks placed on her by God, her founder. And among these were numbered many learned men of the most acute intelligence, who in able works proved the uninterrupted Apostolic succession of the Roman Church, the completeness of her dogmas, and the consistency of her discipline.

APPEAL TO ANGLICANS.

These examples being given, We make an appeal to you, Our dear brothers, who have been divided from Us for now three centuries concerning the faith of Christ, and to you others also who afterwards separated from Us for whatsoever motive. "Let us meet in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephes. iv. 13). To this unity which was never wanting in the Catholic Church. Permit Us, then, to invite you, and with intense love We offer you Our right hand. The Church, the mother of all, from whom you have been

separated so long, recalls you to her. All Catholics desire eagerly that you may pray piously to God with Us, to be closely united with Us in the profession of one Gospel, of one faith, and of one hope, in perfect charity.

TO ALL CATHOLICS.

To complete the harmony of this much-desired unity, it only remains now to give instructions to all those throughout the world to whose salvation We have long devoted Our solicitude and care—that is to say, to Catholics, who by the Roman faith which they profess are at the same time subjects of the Apostolic See and members of Jesus Christ. Certainly We do not need to exhort them to a true and holy unity, as they are already, by the goodness of God, participators of it; but We wish to warn them to strengthen themselves against all dangers, and not to risk the loss by negligence or idleness of that greatest gift of God—their faith. In this connection it is fitting that We should point out the true mode of thinking and carrying out the instructions which We Ourselves have given you many times, either to all the Catholic nations together, or separately to some of them; and, above all, We wish to lay down this law—obedience in all cases to the authority of the Church, not grudgingly, but with good-will. Let them consider how hurtful to Christian unity is error which under different forms of opinion has darkened in many, if not effaced, the essential character and the true idea of the Church. In fact, by the will of God, who established it, it is a society perfect of its kind, having for its object to instruct the human family in Gospel precepts, and to defend the sanctity of the laws; and that the exercise of Christian virtues will lead every one to that happiness which was promised to all from heaven.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE CHURCH.

And since, then, she is a perfect society, as has been said, by this alone she has a principle of life all her own, not affected from without, but providentially implanted by God. By the same reason there is innate in her the power to make laws, and in making them she is not subject to anybody; hence also the necessity that she should be free in all her spheres of action. But this liberty is not of a kind which should give rise to rivalry, for the Church is not ambitious, and does not desire any private ends; but this she wishes, this is her only object, to teach mankind the duties of virtue, and to thus provide for their eternal salvation. And it has always been her custom to act indulgently as a mother, while, on the other hand, she would sometimes, to meet the requirements of the occasion, forego some of her rights, as is clearly shown by the various Concordats. Nothing is more foreign to her than the thought of invading in any way the rights of the State; but it is only just that the State on its side should respect the rights of the Church, and be careful not to interfere with the least portion of them. But to any one who considers the actual state of events,

WHAT IS THE TENDENCY OF THE TIMES?

It is continually to suspicion of the Church, contempt, and hatred, to

spitefully calumniate her ; and, what is more serious, men study every method and try every means to subject her to the power of the Governments. Hence they have robbed her of her own property and restrained her liberty ; they have placed difficulties in the way of the education of the clergy ; they have passed laws of exceptional severity against them ; they have dissolved and prohibited religious confraternities, who were soldiers of the Church ; in a word, they have renewed with the greatest asperity the worst persecutions of the past. This is a violation of the sacred rights of the Church, and has

CAUSED IMMENSE INJURIES TO CIVIL SOCIETY,

being a matter entirely opposed to the divine commands. For God, who is the Sovereign Creator of the universe, who has with the greatest wisdom and providence given to mankind both the civil and the ecclesiastical power, has wished that they should each remain distinct, but He did not wish them to be separated or in conflict. On the contrary, it is the will of God Himself, as the common advantage of human society absolutely requires that the civil governing authorities should harmonize with the ecclesiastical. Hence the

STATE HAS ITS RIGHTS AND DUTIES,

and the Church also has hers, but it is necessary that they should be bound together by the chain of concord. Therefore the tension which often now exists in the relations between the Church and civil Governments will soon come to an end. Also it will be seen that the interests of one and the other are neither opposed nor separate, and the citizens will "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's."

THE FREEMASONS.

Religious unity likewise runs great risks by the acts of the masonic sect, whose disastrous influence has long been imposed upon nations specially Catholic. Favoured by the disturbed events of the age, and by the bold and successful increase of its power, it strove by every means to extend its dominion still further. And, already emerging from its hiding-places and ambushes into the open, and as if to challenge God Himself, it has crept even unto Rome—the metropolis of Catholicism. And the worst result of this is that wherever it penetrates it intrudes itself into every rank and into all social institutions,

ASPIRING TO THE CONTROL AND LORDSHIP OVER ALL.

This is, indeed, a most disastrous result, because there is plain evidence of the wickedness of its opinions and the iniquity of its designs. Under the pretence of recovering the rights of man and restoring the civil community, it furiously assails Christianity, repudiates revelation ; religious duties, the holy sacraments, and everything most sacred they vilify as superstitious ; in matrimony, family ties, the education of youth, in all public and private discipline, they strive to abolish the Christian character and to drive from the heart of the people all reverence for authority, human or divine. They proclaim the worship

of nature, and on the principles of which they wish to regulate virtue, honesty, and justice. By such means it is manifest that mankind would soon return to the customs of pagan life with increased corruption. Although We have on other occasions spoken energetically on this subject, We nevertheless feel it the duty of Apostolic vigilance to continually inculcate that in a matter of such grave danger too much caution cannot be observed. May Almighty God frustrate their nefarious designs; but let the Christian people see and understand that it is their duty to shake off once for all the degrading yoke of the sect, and let them be the more resolute in this in order to free the peoples of France and Italy from its oppression. With what arguments you will best succeed has been already pointed out by Ourselves; nor can we doubt of the victory under that Leader whose divine word will always live: "I have conquered the world" (St. John xvi. 33).

THE RESULTS OF UNITY.

These dangers having been removed, and States and nations brought back to the unity of faith, what efficacious remedies would be found for evils and what an abundance of good would result. Let us examine the principal ones: First as to the dignity of the Church and her action. She would regain her wonted grade of honour, and as the minister of truth and grace, she would pursue her way in secure liberty with most profitable results to the nations. Having been already destined by God to be the guide of mankind, she is in a position to render the most efficacious help, and to moderate the gravest transformations of the age, to solve justly the most complicated social problems and to promote rectitude and justice, the immovable bases of States. There would also follow from this a bond of the closest union between the peoples, more than ever desirable in this age, in order to avoid the horrors of war. We have before Our eyes the present condition of Europe. For many years past we have lived in a peace more apparent than real. Suspicious of each other, nearly all nations are arming themselves with feverish haste. Inexperienced youth, free from paternal supervision, are thrown into all the temptations of military life while in the first flush of youth and strength—drawn away from the cultivation of the fields, from their studies, from their business, from the arts and sciences, being compelled to serve as conscripts. Therefore, exhausted by the enormous expenditure of the State to keep up a standing army, the national wealth is squandered, private fortunes ruined, and this state of armed peace has now become intolerable. Should this be the normal condition of society? In order to be free from these evils and to enjoy perfect peace, we must have recourse to Jesus Christ. To restrain ambition and mutual jealousies and rivalries, which are the most potent factors of war, nothing is more valuable than Christian virtue, and above all justice. By these the rights of every nation are maintained and treaties are held inviolable, and the bonds of human brotherhood are made strong and lasting, their souls being impressed with this truth, that "Justice exalteth a nation" (Proverbs xiv. 34). By no other means than these can the public safety be guarded more effectively. All can see that every day the safety and

tranquillity of the public becomes more menaced. The frequent occurrence of atrocities bears witness to the fact that the secret societies are conspiring for the ruin and destruction of all. Social and political questions are being discussed with great vehemence; these are both grave questions without doubt, and attempts are being made to solve them by studies of the principles of justice and moderation. Praiseworthy as these are, they will not succeed unless guided by the eternal principles of the Christian faith. It is not long since We treated of the social question, bringing to bear on it the principles of the Gospel and natural reason. As regards the political question which is agitated with the view of reconciling liberty with authority, with the result that many confound the two ideas, and become more separated in fact, revealed truth is the most opportune assistance which is available. Since it is accepted that whatever be the form of Government, authority comes from God, therefore reason finds it right that one should command and that others should consent to obey, and this without any loss of personal dignity, because one more readily obeys God than man. God has decreed that He will mete out severe justice to those who have power given them to command, where they do not represent Him with rectitude and justice. The liberty of some individuals cannot be questioned by others, because without injuring any one His action will not depart from righteousness, from truth, or from all that constitutes public tranquillity.

Lastly, if we reflect that the Church is the mother and conciliatrice between the people and Princes, established to help each with her authority and advice, it will be evident how much it helps to public safety when the whole nation are united in their belief of the same principles and profess the same Christian faith. Thinking upon these matters very earnestly, We saw from afar off the new order of events which should reign universally, and We experienced the sweetest joy in thinking of the good which would result. It can scarcely be imagined what a happy advance in greatness and prosperity would inevitably and at once ensue if affairs were restored to tranquillity and peace, if real discipline were promoted, and, further, if there were constituted in a Christian manner according to Our letters,

SOCIETIES OF AGRICULTURE, LABOUR, AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS,

by which usurious interest would be checked and the field widened for useful labour. The full amount of these benefits would not be confined to the people, but, like an overflowing river, would be distributed widely. It is therefore not to be denied that the principle which We enunciated at first is true, that innumerable people have for many ages looked for the light of faith and civil culture to be brought to them. It is certain that, as regards the eternal salvation of the nations, the counsels of divine wisdom are far removed from human intelligence. Nevertheless, in various regions of the earth there still exist deplorable superstitions, and in no small part of it dissensions have arisen in respect of religious questions. In truth, as far as it is given to human reason to discuss events, the mission given by God to Europe seems to be this, that she shall spread throughout the whole world the principles of

Christianity. The commencement and progress of this magnificent enterprise, laboriously carried out in past ages, had resulted in the most happy increase, when in the sixteenth century unforeseen discord arose. Christianity was torn with disputes and dissensions, Europe was shaken by revolutions and wars, and the holy missions suffered from the shock. Now, as the cause of this disorder still continues, what wonder is it that so large a number of the human race should still remain slaves to barbarous customs and insane rites? Let us strive, then, zealously to restore for the public the ancient concord. For this purpose, in order to extend the benefits of the Christian religion, the time is most opportune, since the sentiment of human brotherhood never before penetrated so deeply the souls of men, and in no previous age were they known to seek out their fellow-beings to know their requirements and to benefit them. We now traverse with incredible speed vast regions by land and sea, whence many facilities are afforded for commerce, and scientific discoveries, and also for the spread of the Gospel. We do not ignore how long and arduous labours are required to reconstruct the unsettled state of society; no doubt some persons will judge Our hopes to be vain, because this is a matter more to be desired than expected. But We repose all Our hopes and trust in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, only remembering too well the great events which resulted from the "folly" of the cross and its preaching to the utter confusion of "worldly wisdom." We entreat in particular Princes and Governments, appealing to their prudence and to their loving care of their people, that they may ponder over the wisdom of Our counsels, and second them with the strength of their authority. If only a portion of the desired fruit should result, it would be counted as no small benefit, in presence of this great universal ruin, when to the insupportable weight of the present there is added the apprehension of the future. The end of the last century left Europe worn out by wars and shaken by revolutions. On the other hand, as regards the century now about to end, why should it not transmit to the human race hopes of concord with the hope of the inestimable benefits which unity in the faith implies? "God, who is rich in mercy, in whose power are all times and moments," favours Our desires, and hastens to concede by His supreme benignity the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus Christ, "And there shall be made one fold and one Shepherd."

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, the 20th of June, 1894, the seventeenth year of Our Pontificate.

LEO PP. XIII.

Date Due

MAR 5 '58



PRINTED IN U. S. A.

BX1374 .A3P83

Apostolic letter ... on the reunion of

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00044 9522